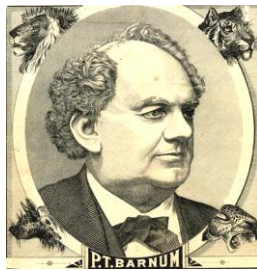


# The BARNUM



# MUSEUM

**Date:** February 10, 2016  
**To:** **Appropriations Committee**  
Senator Beth Bye  
Representative Ezequiel Santiago

**SUBJECT MATTER: State Agency Deficiencies**

H.B. No. 5044 AN ACT MAKING DEFICIENCY APPROPRIATIONS AND ADDRESSING THE DEFICIT FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2016.

**Dear Members of the Committee;**

**Thank you for providing me the opportunity to submit testimony related to the preservation of the HISTORIC BARNUM MUSEUM.** My name is Kathleen Maher and I am the Executive Director of the Barnum Museum in Bridgeport.

The Barnum Museum has served over 3 million learners from Connecticut and the world-over since it's opening in 1893. It is a viable and vibrant place of learning and it is one of the State's most iconic destinations for our citizens and global travelers, supporting higher education, stimulating community investment and economic development.

In 2010, the Barnum Museum suffered catastrophic damaged from an EF1 tornado that ravaged downtown Bridgeport, with additional destruction from both Hurricanes Irene and Sandy. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the CT Trust for Historic Preservation and CT Humanities were immediate responders to the devastating aftermath of these horrific storms. With their support, the Barnum Museum leveraged dollar-for-dollar the State investment that enabled us to initiate the first phase of the major historic restoration and revitalization. The Museum has successfully raised and invested \$3.2 million dollars toward restoration efforts and to continue limited operations. A portion of this funding has contributed toward the planning of a re-imagined site for the future that promises to 're-invent museum-going' for a 21<sup>st</sup> century Connecticut. Innovations that incorporate scholarship, storytelling, technology, art and science lead the creation of a new educational Museum experience and throw the doors wide-open for an emerging creative and cause-based economy.

Currently, the Barnum Museum is raising funds to contract the design phase of construction that will make the restoration shovel ready for 2017. Fundraising efforts are the main focus of Barnum Museum administration and Board of Directors. **WE NEED TO CONTINUE THE STATE PARTNERSHIP. YOUR INVESTMENT WILL ENABLE US TO LEVERAGE ADDITIONAL DOLLARS THAT WILL HELP OPEN OUR DOORS.**

The Barnum Museum contributes to the developing socio-economic potential of the City through its ability to merge creativity with knowledge/information. A prominent **LANDMARK** in the heart of Bridgeport's historic downtown, the Barnum Museum is at the crossroads of arts, culture, **business and technology**. The convergence of these activities within the framework of the Museum translates into economic impact and value including:

- Collaborations and Partnerships with local and regional universities to expand technology, engineering and humanities programs and activities to position students, life-long learners and educators for emerging technological **job opportunities**.
- Collaborations with local and regional libraries to develop and advance community-based learning through experiment and investigation as part of the **cradle to career continuum in Bridgeport**.



- Collaborations with local and regional restaurants, hotels, and attractions to create new, vibrant **tourism destination opportunities** for local and I95 corridor traffic (building on New Haven tourism model.)

The Barnum Museum is a beacon of arts and culture leveraging community resources to advance a **robust arts, culture and entertainment center**. The Museum collaborates with the Downtown Special Services District, Ball Park at Harbor Yard and Webster Bank Arena at Harbor Yard as centers of the City owned sports and entertainment district.

**Without urgently needed state support, the Barnum Museum's future is uncertain.** Although we continue to push forward to raise capital dollars to save Connecticut's nationally significant landmark, we now face a critical juncture where every minute counts.

State funding for the Barnum Museum is an investment in the future; an investment that will yield economic activity and gain to the region and state, and inspire new growth and revitalization for Connecticut's largest city.

I humbly ask the Members to fully support the continued funding and not allow this impending cut to be the final devastating blow to the existence of the historic Barnum Museum.

Most Sincerely,

*Kathleen Maher*

Executive Director

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*"The Noblest Art Is That Of Making Others Happy"* P.T. Barnum, 1886

